

# CHICAGO'S OLD FIRST WARD

## A CASE STUDY IN POLITICAL BEHAVIOR

BY HAROLD D. LASSWELL

*University of Chicago*

*We have all heard of "Bathhouse" Coughlin and "Hinky Dink" Kenna and they can be duplicated in any large city. But what about their constituencies? What are their hopes and fears and politics? And why?*

ONE aspect of the task of the systematic student of politics is to describe political behavior in those social situations which recur with sufficient frequency to make prediction useful as a preliminary to control. In every urban area large enough for segregation to take place there are substantial areas in which residential property is radically depreciated through the encroachment of business enterprises. When these are organized into a political unit under universal suffrage, they display somewhat distinctive types of political behavior. This paper is an attempt to describe such behavior, using the First Ward of Chicago as a case in point.

## A DEPRECIATED RESIDENCE PROPERTY AREA

The First Ward includes the central business section and the light manufacturing and lodging house area to the south. The steady encroachment of industry has driven out the home makers, and but a tenth of the developed property of the ward is used for housing purposes.

1. Low rentals and proximity to transportation induce the *industrially handicapped* to congregate in this area, and this includes those who are handicapped by lack of funds, technical

skill, or language skill. On South State Street six blocks are given over to the casual laborers (the hoboes), with whom are billeted beggars, pan-handlers, peddlers and junk dealers. Twelve hundred Chinese are congregated in Clark Street below Van Buren and in the Wentworth-Archer-22nd Street triangle. At various places the South Italians, Sicilians, negroes and Austro-Hungarian nationalities are localized.

2. *Visitors* congregate near the depreciated property area because it is closely associated with the central business district in which the attractions of the city are located and where the railroad passenger terminals converge. Visitors spell mobility with its accompanying anonymity. Freed from the conventional restraints of the home environment, they are susceptible to new, and frequently unconventional, experiences.

3. *Moral rebels* find a congenial habitat in the disintegrated areas. These range from the erratic non-conformists—many artists, hoboes, and radicals—to the predatory groups who use the anonymous life of the locality as the base of operations against the propertied wards.

4. Wealthy clubmen with city-wide interests live in exclusive institutions

within the geographical confines of the ward, though scarcely participating in such neighborhood life as does exist.

In short, the depreciated residence property areas accentuate the disintegrative factors present in every community, and introduce sharp segregations about acquaintance nuclei which have practically nothing in common as far as the long-run interests of the neighborhood are concerned.

#### POLITICAL BEHAVIOR

What, then, are the typical political phenomena observed under the conditions sketched above, circumstances which are duplicated in varying degrees in every city? It must be understood, of course, that the statements here reflect merely quantitative degrees of difference as compared with the behavior of, let us say, residential neighborhoods.

1. Where the industrially handicapped live in large numbers and the government offers unskilled jobs on a patronage basis, some *leaders will emerge to act as intermediaries, dispensing jobs in return for political support.* John ("Bathhouse") Coughlin and Michael ("Hinky Dink") Kenna have closely knit precinct organizations which serve as informal employment agencies, connecting needy workers with the street cleaning department of the government and the construction gangs of utility companies. The industrially handicapped have, in times past, been advanced rent, fed, and sent on their way rejoicing and subject to call for political service.

#### EFFICIENCY MEASURES UNPOPULAR

2. When the power of the leaders depends on patronage and the jobless men of the area need work, it is not surprising to find that *leaders and the rank and file oppose efficiency measures and favor high expenditures.* The alder-

men of the First Ward opposed the extension of the merit system to street cleaners, opposed the competitive system of letting contracts, and voted against non-partisan committee organization of the city council. The willingness of the aldermen to boost appropriations accurately reflects the sentiment of the ward, as shown by the attitude of their constituents on a recent referendum as contrasted with the attitude of a wealthy residential ward:

#### SHALL \$8,000,000 IN BONDS BE ISSUED?

(February 22, 1921)

Ward	For	Against
1.....	6,374	889
7.....	5,673	7,808

3. Such a community, possessing moral non-conformers, wants "*personal liberty*" and acts toward men and measures on this basis. Personal liberty is taken to mean freedom from the imposition of the *mores* of the residential districts on the community, especially with reference to vice and the saloon. Alderman Coughlin, who has been the orator of the Kenna-Coughlin partnership, takes the personal liberty theme perennially. When the issue is drawn, the community rallies to the standard of its protectors. It was the 1914 campaign made by Miss Marion Drake on an anti-Coughlin-Kenna-vice platform which revealed the true attitude of the ward:

	Men	Women	Total
Coughlin, Dem.....	4,977	1,729	6,706
Drake, Prog.....	1,654	1,137	2,791

Miss Drake was assisted in her vigorous campaign by parades and demonstrations staged by art students and student nurses, and supported by ministers and social workers from all over the city. The women's clubs had long taken an interest in the morals of the First Ward (some members visiting

the burlesque shows personally to discover the depravity of the locality), and it is little exaggeration to say that the First Ward was honeycombed with moral reformers, inspectors, and investigators.

Naturally the people of the First Ward are tired of being examined by the curious from all over the city. They resent the interference of the moralists. They regard themselves and their chiefs as persecuted for personal liberty's sake. Nothing serves to consolidate the affection of the ward for "the little fellow" more closely than a "clean up" campaign engineered from outside or from the expensive hotels of the neighborhood.

#### **THEY VOTE FAITHFULLY—THUS THEIR INFLUENCE IS DISPROPORTIONATE**

4. The people *vote more faithfully than the electorate of the residential wards*, for the voters of these areas have more to gain immediately by participation, and these things are (1) freedom to live their lives according to their own code, and (2) opportunity for employment. The election of April 6, 1921, is not untypical. Although the Seventh Ward showed a registration 10 per cent higher relative to population than the First Ward, 27 per cent of the registered voters of the First Ward participated, as contrasted with 7 per cent of the Seventh Ward registrants who voted.

5. The disintegrated ward tends to *wield more than its proportionate influence in politics over short periods of time*. This is not only true because the First Ward has such a substantial proportion with tangible stakes in the government, but because it tends to be overrepresented between the decennial reapportionments. Before the last redistricting went into effect this ward had 46,000 people as compared with 150,000 in a rapidly growing ward,

the Twenty-Seventh. Disintegrated wards are "disappearing wards."

6. *Where large pecuniary interests require the exercise of government powers, the influence which the leaders possess by virtue of jobs and protection is freely used to satisfy them.* The aldermen from the First Ward have been favorable to, and occasionally initiators of, proposals for granting franchises condemned by the Municipal Voters' League as securing inadequate compensation for the city.<sup>1</sup> The aldermen have secured the passage of ordinances granting exceptional privileges to certain of the large downtown department stores.

Real estate firms tend to have a vested interest in the lax administration of law in these areas. During the period when property is incapable of yielding high incomes for residence purposes, large firms and many wealthy individuals purchase property as a speculation in anticipation of the rising tide of business. Commercialized vice is one of the most profitable sources of income during this period of transition, and large real estate firms outwardly respectable rent for houses of ill fame. The Chicago Vice Commission revealed that in 1910 eight of eleven large loop companies were willing to rent property for sporting house purposes, though many of the clients of these firms were innocent of the way in which their agents conducted business.

#### **POLITICS A MAN-TO-MAN PROPOSITION**

7. *The political leaders are men of their word. They know how to play the rôle of helping out a fellow who is temporarily unlucky.* Kenna declares in personal interview that "my success is due to honesty." His word is as good as his bond. Said a Salvation Army

<sup>1</sup> Specific instances cited in the M. V. L. summary of franchise legislation, 1898.

captain to the inquirer, " 'Hinky Dink' is the squarest man God ever made." And when these men give aid there are no questionnaires to fill out and no grand flourishes of the self-consciously beneficent. It is a man-to-man proposition. Personal and primary virtues of loyalty and fellowship are exalted; the reason oral bonds are observed so strictly is that some of the arrangements within the group will scarcely bear the scrutiny of the efficiency theorists of the residential wards.

8. *Leaders find that political manipulation offers a lucrative career.* Acquaintances are made by working in cigar stores, saloons, restaurants, lodging houses; or by engaging in a modest real estate and insurance business. "Politics pays" in Ward No. 1, and it offers a chance for the expansion of personality, for the control of men, and for the achievement of that distinction which comes from broad contacts and preoccupation as a "man of affairs." On the financial side it is a matter of common knowledge that Mr. Kenna's personal representatives in the real estate business are heavily interested in North Shore apartments.

#### BUT IMPROVEMENT GOES FORWARD

9. *When measured over a term of years, property improvements, administrative efficiency, and moral conformity have all been on the increase in these areas.* As far as property improvements are concerned, the reason for this has already been indicated with sufficient clearness—new boulevard lights, new public buildings, new paving spell jobs. In this particular the interest of the First Ward and the real estate men and residence owners is the same.

The increase in efficiency and moral restraint must be accounted for differently. In general, the residence wards

tend to be politically apathetic because political participation does not affect them so obviously as it does a large proportion of the lodging house areas, and because they have a greater range of interests. They leave the running of the government in the hands of the professionals, and if vice and crime do not become *too* conspicuous, and if property improvements are looked after, there is little to complain of. If there is a slight overcharge (sometimes called graft) on the part of the professionals, it may be regarded as a fee for special service.

But pressure for the enlargement of the fee and the loosening of judicial administration is persistently influencing the leaders of the depreciated property areas. Over a period of time this results in mounting taxes, some conspicuous instances of excess payment and a crime wave. The taxpayers of the residential wards are aroused from their lethargy, and a crusade for efficiency and righteousness in government takes place. The mayor, elected on a city-wide basis, is the target, and the council is quickened. New devices are put into effect and tend to become habitual. Thus it is that successive waves of crusading zeal, political cycles of reform, tend to leave progressively better conditions throughout the entire municipality. Rev. Johnston Myers, pastor of the famous Emanuel Baptist Church, says emphatically on this point that "Conditions are so much better now than they were twenty-eight years ago that there is no comparison. One couldn't go ten blocks in certain streets without being solicited by fifty women. Now all is changed."

Thus an accommodation exists between the property improvement-efficiency-moral residence wards and the job hunting-high expenditure-personal liberty lodging house areas. Because

these characteristics are mere variations of degree, the conflict is seldom clear cut, except in the crusading intervals.

And this accommodation will continue to exist, at least until the residents of the outlying wards provide adequate social machinery for administering to the needs of the industrially handi-

capped who seek refuge in the mobility wards. For, as we have seen, the foundation of the "boss system" is really laid in human ministering to human needs—human needs for personal help in getting a job, in getting adjusted to a new world, and in securing a career which brings its due of social recognition.

## MAKING 'EM RIDE

### THE CIVIC SIDE OF THE WEEKLY STREET CAR PASS

BY WALTER JACKSON

*Fare and Bus Consultant, Mount Vernon, N. Y.*

*Approximately thirty cities have introduced the weekly street car pass. It is transferable and you ride all you want to for a dollar or so a week.*

In the summer of 1919, while engaged as fare consultant to the Milwaukee Electric Railway & Light Company for its Racine (Wis.) lines, the writer found it desirable to recommend an adaptation of the old-time foreign season ticket. This he dubbed "The Unlimited Ride, Transferable Weekly Pass," a term that is almost self-explanatory. To make it entirely clear, however, the designation may be explained in parallel with the older style of unlimited-ride transportation that suggested the weekly variety.

"Unlimited ride" is common to most season tickets. Abroad, such tickets are good only for the original purchaser, whereas the writer suggested that they should be "transferable" or good for bearer. There were practical reasons for this. One was that we wished to popularize the pass, which meant the avoidance of contract forms and all special effort on the part of prospective purchasers. Therefore, unlike all preceding season tickets,

the weekly pass is purchasable on the car exactly as if one bought a single ride.

Another reason for making the pass "transferable" was the practical impossibility of identifying a passenger on a street car. This may be possible on a suburban train where the same conductor meets the same group of passengers every day and has ample time for inspection; but it is not possible in short-headway, crowded-car city operation. Therefore we made a virtue out of necessity by blazoning the fact that one could transfer his privilege of unlimited riding to others. Now, as a matter of fact, our advertising is intended to make the pass so useful in its purchaser's eyes that he will be most loath to give it to others—he has too many occasions to benefit from its use himself. So we find by experience that the average number of rides taken per transferable pass per week for cities of given size does not vary materially from the averages for